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REGIONAL APPROACH TO DISARMAMENT WITHIN THE CONTEXT OF GLOBAL SECURITY

Letter dated 29 April 1991 from the head of the Chinese delegation addressed to the Chairman of the Disarmament Commission

I have the honour to transmit to you a working paper entitled "China's basic position on regional approach to disarmament within the context of global security". The Chinese text and its English translation are enclosed herewith.

I would be grateful if you could kindly arrange to have this text circulated as a document of the Disarmament Commission under item 6 of the agenda of this session.

(Signed) Hou Zhitong
Head of the Chinese delegation
to the 1991 session of
the Disarmament Commission

READEX FICHE

Annex

REGIONAL APPROACH TO DISARMAMENT WITHIN THE CONTEXT OF GLOBAL SECURITY

China's basic position on regional approach to disarmament within the context of global security

Working paper submitted by China

1. Appropriate regional disarmament activities initiated and participated by States when specific conditions of their own regions permit and require are conducive to the relaxation of tension in the regions concerned, and to regional peace, security, cooperation and development, and will have a positive bearing on other regions' as well as global efforts for peace, security and disarmament.

2. Progress in regional disarmament depends firstly on the specific circumstances and conditions of the region involved. Therefore, States within the region should make efforts in the following aspects to promote regional disarmament on the basis of adherence to the purposes and principles enshrined in the United Nations Charter:

(a) The right of States to choose, in the light of their national conditions, their own political, economic and social systems should be respected;

(b) States should respect each other's sovereignty and territorial integrity, and refrain from aggression against each other and interference in each other's internal affairs;

(c) States should seek peaceful settlement of their disputes through consultations and dialogue without using or threatening to use force;

(d) States should not seek an armament and military spending level that exceeds their legitimate defence requirements;

(e) States, big or small, strong or weak, are entitled to participate, on an equal footing, in consultations on and settlement of matters concerning their region.

3. Regional disarmament efforts can hardly proceed in isolation and are naturally conditioned and affected by the extraregional environment. Therefore, it is highly necessary to create favourable external conditions and environment to promote regional disarmament. In this respect, extraregional States, particularly States possessing the largest arsenals, should render active cooperation and support to regional disarmament efforts.

(a) They should respect the independence, sovereignty and security of States in regions concerned, and refrain from any threat, interference, subversion and aggression against these States by any means and under whatever pretext;

(b) They should work as soon as possible towards a fair and reasonable settlement of regional conflict by political means and towards the removal of regional hot-spots and let States concerned and their people decide their own destiny;

(c) They should drastically reduce and ultimately eliminate completely all forms of their military presence and dismantle their military bases and installations in the regions concerned. Troops thus reduced should be disbanded and weapons, equipment and facilities thus reduced should be disposed of by means of destruction or conversion. They should neither be adapted to other weapon systems or redeployed in other regions, nor transferred or sold to other countries.

4. Security environment, armament levels, historical background and cultural tradition vary from region to region. States in the same region are also heterogeneous in terms of social system, ideology, history and culture. Therefore, in examining the question of regional disarmament, this reality should be recognized and respected and full consideration given to the following basic principles:

(a) Regions where serious military confrontation and high armaments concentrations exist should take the lead in concluding and implementing agreement on drastic arms reductions, establishing a military balance at lower levels of forces and eliminating the capability for surprise attack and large-scale offensive action;

(b) Various regions should, proceeding from their specific conditions and characteristics, at the initiative and with the participation of the States concerned, reach agreement and adopt measures on regional disarmament acceptable to those States on the premise of undiminished security for all;

(c) Regional disarmament agreements should not jeopardize the legitimate security interests of other regions and States, and should conform to the basic norms governing international relations;

(d) Extraregional States should respect all regional disarmament agreements conducive to peace and security and refrain from any activities harmful to the implementation of these agreements.

5. Specific regional disarmament measures and steps should and can only be initiated and agreed upon through consultations and negotiations by States within the region. In this connection, there does not exist any modal applicable to all regions. Based on this understanding and in the light of the practice and experience of the international community, the following measures may be taken:

(a) Nuclear-weapon-free zones may be established according to the actual conditions of a region through consultations and by voluntary agreement of the States concerned. Nuclear-weapon States should respect the status of such zones, undertake corresponding obligations and ensure not to use or threaten to use nuclear weapons against these zones;

(b) Peace zones defined and determined freely by the States concerned therein may be established under appropriate conditions;

(c) The establishment of an appropriate nuclear non-proliferation regime should be encouraged and facilitated by States in the region. They may also declare not to acquire, develop, produce and use weapons of mass destruction, and may prohibit or restrict the use of certain conventional weapons which may be deemed to be excessively injurious or to have indiscriminate effects;

(d) Confidence-building measures and measures concerning the exchange of and openness and transparency in objective information on military matters suitable to conditions of various States of a region may be adopted through voluntary consultations in the light of the specific environment and political, military and security conditions of various States of the region;

(e) States in a region, while taking into account the need of ensuring their security and keeping necessary defensive capabilities, may take, by agreement, appropriate actions in the field of conventional disarmament so as to ensure that their armaments are used solely for defensive purposes;

(f) Regional disarmament can be effected step by step. In order to increase confidence, reduce tension, remove conflict and strengthen security, the States concerned may, in the light of their specific conditions and need, enhance dialogue and consultations and adopt practical measures bilaterally, including such confidence-building measures in the military sphere as to refrain from any military exercise directed against each other along the border, limit the scale, frequency and geographical scope of military exercises at border areas, inform each other of the scale, frequency and geographical scope of military exercises and major troop movements in border areas, invite each other to observe military exercises, exchange annual plans on relevant military activities, agree upon areas free from military exercises. This can create conditions for possible further regional arrangements;

(g) Without compromising the legitimate defensive capabilities of various States, while fully taking into account their legitimate needs in this connection and their weapons manufacturing and production capacity, the possibility of working out specific measures concerning reasonable regulation and restriction of weapon transfers should be explored;

(h) In the course of regional disarmament, existing regional mechanisms should be used as much as possible and the role of United Nations Regional Centres for Peace and Disarmament should be brought into play.